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**PRESS RELEASE**  
For Immediate Release

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## **Arnold Rampersad Named Winner Of 77<sup>th</sup> Annual Anisfield-Wolf Book Prize Lifetime Achievement Award**

**Biographer to Join Winners Esi Edugyan, David Blight, and David Livingstone Smith at Cleveland Awards Ceremony on Sept. 13 Hosted by the Cleveland Foundation and Emceed by Jury Chair Henry Louis Gates**

CLEVELAND, Ohio (July 10, 2012) – Arnold Rampersad, the award-winning biographer, literary critic, and professor emeritus at Stanford University, is the winner of the 77th Annual **Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards** ([www.Anisfield-Wolf.org](http://www.Anisfield-Wolf.org)) Lifetime Achievement Award. The announcement was made by Henry Louis Gates Jr., the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African-American Research at Harvard University, who serves as jury chair, and Ronald B. Richard, president and chief executive officer of the Cleveland Foundation, which administers the prize.

The **Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards** is the country's only juried literary competition devoted to recognizing books that have made an important contribution to society's understanding of racism and the diversity of human cultures. The esteemed jury, overseen by Gates, includes poet Rita Dove, author Joyce Carol Oates, psychologist Steven Pinker, and art historian Simon Schama. Each year, the jury honors works of fiction and non-fiction and recognizes one individual whose life work has enhanced an understanding of cultural diversity. Previous Lifetime Achievement Award winners include Oprah Winfrey, August Wilson, and Gordon Parks.

Rampersad is the author of the two-volume work, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, which is widely considered the definitive biography of the poet. Volume One, published in 1986, won an Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Nonfiction in 1987; Volume Two, published in 1988, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1989. He has also written award-winning biographies of Ralph Ellison, Jackie Robinson, and W.E.B. DuBois. "Arnold Rampersad has illuminated the lives of the central figures in African-American literary and cultural studies," commented Gates. "By so doing, he has single-handedly inserted the African-American character into American biographical literature."

The other winners of the **2012 Anisfield-Wolf Awards**, who were announced this past April, are **Esi Edugyan**, for *Half-Blood Blues: A Novel* (Fiction), **David Blight**, for *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era* (Nonfiction), and **David Livingstone Smith** for *Less Than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others* (Nonfiction). Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, who was previously announced as a winner of the 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award, will be honored at the 2013 awards ceremony.

"Cleveland poet and philanthropist Edith Anisfield Wolf believed in the power of the written word to help shape a better world. She saw literature as a catalyst to spark dialogue, which she felt was essential to bridging distrust and misunderstanding," said Richard. "Arnold Rampersad and the other 2012 winners are a proud testament to her legacy."

### **About Arnold Rampersad**

Rampersad is the Sara Hart Kimball Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University. He has also held teaching positions at Rutgers, Columbia, and Princeton universities. His books include *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B.*

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*DuBois* (1976); *The Life of Langston Hughes* (2 vols. 1986, 1988); *Days of Grace: A Memoir* (1993), co-authored with Arthur Ashe; *Jackie Robinson: A Biography* (1997); and *Ralph Ellison: A Biography* (2007). In addition, he has edited several volumes including *Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*; the Library of America edition (2 vols.) of works by Richard Wright, with revised individual editions of *Native Son* and *Black Boy*; and (as co-editor with Deborah McDowell) *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*. He was also co-editor, with Shelley Fisher Fishkin, of the *Race and American Culture* book series published by Oxford University Press. From 1991 to 1996, he held a MacArthur Foundation fellowship and is an elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society. He is a 2010 recipient of the National Humanities Medal.

### **About the Anisfield-Wolf Prize**

The Anisfield-Wolf winners will be honored in Cleveland on Sept. 13 at a ceremony at the Ohio Theatre hosted by the Cleveland Foundation and emceed by Jury Chair Gates. The Cleveland Foundation has administered the book awards since 1963, upon the death of its creator, Edith Anisfield Wolf. The Anisfield-Wolf prize remains the only juried American literary competition devoted to recognizing books that have made an important contribution to society's understanding of racism and the diversity of human cultures.

For additional information, including a complete list of winners, visit [www.Anisfield-Wolf.org](http://www.Anisfield-Wolf.org).

### **About the Cleveland Foundation**

Established in 1914, the Cleveland Foundation is the world's first community foundation and one of the largest today, with assets of \$1.8 billion and 2011 grants of \$80 million. Through the generosity of our donors, the foundation improves the lives of Greater Clevelanders by building community endowment, addressing needs through grantmaking, and providing leadership on vital issues. The foundation tackles the community's vital issues – economic transformation, public-school improvement, youth development, neighborhood revitalization, and arts advancement – and responds to the community's needs.

For more information on the Cleveland Foundation, please visit [www.ClevelandFoundation.org](http://www.ClevelandFoundation.org).

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